

HISTORIC OVERVIEW OF PAST CONGRESSES OF ARACHNOLOGY AND OF THE CENTRE INTERNATIONAL DE DOCUMENTATION ARACHNOLOGIQUE (C.I.D.A.)

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ABSTRACT. In 1959, Hermann Wiehle encouraged junior colleagues to arrange a meeting for arachnologists. This was held in 1960 at the University of Bonn, Germany, and is counted as the first in the series of international congresses. After a second conference, held just one year later in Saarbrücken, Germany, a third truly international congress followed in 1965 in Frankfurt am Main. On this occasion, Max Vachon presented his idea to form what was later called the C.I.D.A. This institution was formally established at the occasion of the 4th congress, held in Paris in 1968. Detailed information on the origins, the series of congresses, and the C.I.D.A. up to 1968 is presented.

The state of arachnology during the first half of this century, and its condition following developments after World War II, differed strikingly. This is illustrated by two figures. Roewer's original catalog, and later supplementary entries, lists a total of 71 papers on spider systematics published in 1939. The equivalent figure for 1995 (according to the entries in Platnick's catalogue) is 268—almost four times more. This difference can only partially be explained by a world-wide increase in the number of universities and other research institutions, combined with an increasing number of researchers. Two other factors seem to be much more important: Air travel to foreign countries and world-wide personal contacts between researchers had become relatively easy. At the same time, primarily European conferences on arachnology quickly evolved into international congresses. The foundation of the "Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique"—the C.I.D.A.—in Paris, formed an integrative part of this development.

Traveling.—Up to the 1950s, most arachnologists did not know each other personally. They exchanged reprints, wrote kind (and other) letters; and they mainly traveled by train. Collecting and research work, especially in tropical countries, necessitated the organization of expeditions. Due to increasing international air travel facilities, this situation changed quite rapidly. American colleagues crossed the Atlantic, worked in European col-

lections and studied type materials; and personal contacts frequently resulted in firm friendships. As the western part of Europe recovered from the war, more and more European arachnologists were also able to go to other countries.

The aircraft most frequently used in those early days was the "Lockheed Super Constellation" with a cruising speed of 255 mph. Some people called it the world's safest three-propeller airplane, as there was a rumor that one of its four engines could occasionally be out of order. In these early days, Ernest Browning of the Department of Arachnology at the British Museum still prepared his endless lists for the Zoological Record by hand.

International organization and cooperation.—Most of those present in Chicago for the XIV International Arachnological Congress may not know how the flourishing series of International Arachnological Congresses originated, including the origins of C.I.D.A. So, I was asked, how it is that the present meeting is the 14th conference in the series. For these reasons, I will concentrate on the early history.

Late in 1959, the German arachnologist Hermann Wiehle (1884–1966, Fig. 1) conceived the idea that arachnologists should come together. Not only would this allow them to discuss scientific problems, but it would foster personal contacts and cooperation among arachnologists. Wiehle may be regarded as the initiator of our congresses. As



Figure 1.—Hermann Wiehle, the initiator of the International Congresses of Arachnology (photo taken on 23 April 1965 at the 3rd congress).

he lived in the eastern part of Germany (which was dominated by the Soviet Union at that time) and did not hold any office, he encouraged two junior arachnologists to arrange a meeting: Wolfgang Crome, curator at the Berlin Museum, and Ernst Kullmann, at that time scientific assistant at the University of Bonn.

As the next annual meeting of the German Zoological Society was scheduled to be held in Bonn, Kullmann used this meeting, in 1960, as a platform for hosting the arachnology conference. Approximately 20 German arachnologists attended (Fig. 2). The presence of Father Chrysanthus from the Netherlands, who worked on spiders from New Guinea, provided a bare minimum of international participation. Wiehle himself contributed a paper on "Der Embolus des männlichen Spinnentasters." Despite the fact that this study, based on functional morphology including aspects of co-adaptation between male and female genital structures, was of considerable importance and far ahead of its time, the topic remained almost completely neglected—even until now. Another contributor was Heinrich Homann who reported on retinal structures of spider eyes. Homann's landmark study con-

tributed greatly to our present understanding of certain aspects of aranaeomorph phylogeny.

Carl Friedrich Roewer, at this time nearly 80 years old, did not attend. Volume 2 of his "Katalog der Araneae," comprising 1751 pages, had been published in two voluminous parts five years previously. The availability of Roewer's completed catalog was a tremendous stimulus to araneologists. In principle, the information was arranged so perfectly that Paolo Brignoli, as well as Norman Platnick, had no reason to make major changes when they published four supplementary volumes in 1983, 1989, 1993, and 1997.

Everybody felt that meetings of arachnologists should be continued. Those present in Bonn resolved with enthusiasm that the next (second) conference should take place one year later (1961) in Saarbrücken. This was relatively close to the German/French border. Again, the annual meeting of the German Zoological Society was used as a vehicle. Kullmann had just accepted a position in Afghanistan for a couple of years. So I was asked to organize the meeting. The intention was to broaden the scientific basis and further to encourage attendance by colleagues from other European countries. This approach was successful: a large group of French arachnologists attended, including Pierre Bonnet and Max Vachon; and Peter van Helsdingen from the Netherlands also joined the meeting.

A gap of four years followed; but this was not at all a period of inactivity. In April 1964, Max Vachon came to Frankfurt for a couple of days and visited me, then curator at the Senckenberg Museum (Fig. 3). We discussed details of the forthcoming meeting of arachnologists to be held one year later, in 1965, in Frankfurt and, more importantly, how international cooperation in the field of arachnology could be improved. This was the conception, but not yet the birth, of C.I.D.A. Vachon, who was the last representative of the great French tradition, proposed the formation of an international organization which later became known as the "Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique." The Frankfurt congress was held from 21–25 April 1965. Originally, it was called "III. Treffen europäischer Arachnologen", but the designation "III. Kongreß europäischer Arachnologen" was used in the printed congress report (Senckenbergiana Biol., 47(1):1966). Fifty-

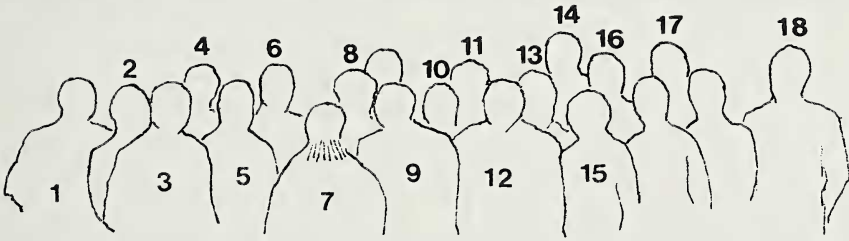


Figure 2.—Group of arachnologists at the first meeting in 1960 in Bonn. 1, G. Schmidt; 2, H. Casemir; 3, H. Homann; 4, B. von Broen; 5, H. Nemens; 6, R. Braun; 7, Father Chrysanthus; 8, H. Wiehle; 9, E. Kullmann; 10, Mrs. Kullmann; 11, H. Hiebsch; 12, R. Lehmensick; 13, M. Grasshoff; 14, W. Engelhardt; 15, Mrs. Crome; 16, W. Crome; 17, O. Kraus; 18, B. Heydemann.

three arachnologists were present. They came from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Yugoslavia, The Netherlands, Poland, Ruma-

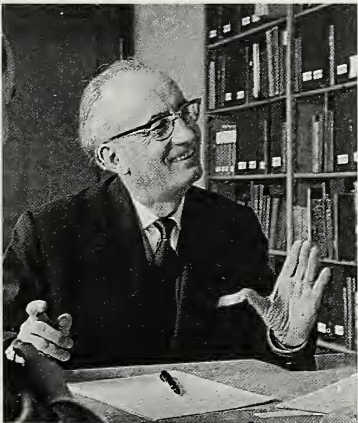


Figure 3.—Max Vachon vigorously discussing the foundation of the C.I.D.A. (conference held on 17 April 1964 at the Senckenberg-Museum, Frankfurt am Main).

nia and from Switzerland (Fig. 4). A business meeting was held, in which Vachon explained our joint ideas to establish the C.I.D.A. at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle. He further proposed to meet three years later, in 1968, in Paris. These plans were unanimously accepted. Vachon started work as the "Secrétaire général permanent du C.I.D.A.," and I was elected as the first president of the organization just created. The C.I.D.A. was born! There are only a very few survivors who can still remember Wiehle's unforgettable "Rede über die Freundschaft" [lecture on friendship], held at the occasion of the farewell dinner. This perfectly reflected the general enthusiastic atmosphere.

Between 1965 and 1968, intensive contacts between Frankfurt and Paris followed. The world-wide system of C.I.D.A. correspondents was established, and details of the forthcoming meeting were carefully arranged. The Paris conference was officially called "IVème Congrès International d'Arachnologie." It took place from 8–13 April 1968, at the Mu-



Figure 4.—Pierre Bonnet (left) and G.H. Lockett (right) in conversation (photo taken on 23 April 1965 at the 3rd congress).

séum National d'Histoire Naturelle," a sacred place in arachnology. A total of 109 arachnologists from 23 nations attended, including participants from Algeria, Argentina, Canada, USA, India, Israel, Madagascar, Turkey, and Uruguay. The international scope was established step by step, but the fourth congress in Paris was the first which really had a worldwide scope. The program included no less than 60 contributions and the presentation of 11 scientific films (for details see the proceedings: *Bull. Mus. Natn. Hist. Nat.*, (2)41, Suppl. 1; 1969). Roger Legendre was elected as president for the forthcoming period. The congress participants accepted my proposal that the next meeting should be held in Brno, Czechoslovakia. The idea behind this was that more colleagues from eastern countries would obtain permission to attend. But this proved to be an error.

The fifth "Brno Congress" was held from 30 August–4 September 1971. Ninety-seven participants from 23 countries attended. Compared to the preceeding congress in Paris, there was only a slight decline in the number of arachnologists present, but only 6 colleagues came from countries outside Europe (Paris: 13). Officially, the congress was organized by the "Institute of Vertebrate Zoology," Director J. Kratochvíl. However, it was Dr. Vladimír Silhavy, a physician and qualified amateur arachnologist specialized in the Phalangida who did all the work. He also pre-

pared the congress proceedings. These were technically published in "1972" by the Institute already mentioned, but the publication was not issued until May 1973 as a separate volume.

From this point forward, a self-perpetuating cycle of international conferences was clearly established. Information on the succeeding congresses, numbered 6–13, is readily obtainable as their proceedings were published regularly and are accessible. So I simply mention places, countries and organizers: VI: Amsterdam (Netherlands), P. van Helsdingen.—VII: Exeter (UK), A.F. Millidge; VIII: Vienna (Austria), H. Nemenz and J. Gruber; IX: Panama City (Panama), M. Robinson; X: Jaca (Spain), M. Rambla; XI: Turku (Finland), P. Lehtinen; XII: Brisbane (Australia), R. Raven; XIII: Geneva (Switzerland), V. Mahnert.—It is noteworthy that only two out of these 13 congresses have been held outside Europe. This seems to be correlated with the geographical distribution of those arachnologists with access to substantial institutional assistance, financial resources and appropriate publishing facilities.

Concluding remarks.—Against this background, the present invitation by the American Arachnological Society to have this meeting, for the first time in the United States, is appreciated. We are extremely grateful to Petra Sierwald and her collaborators for undertaking the laborious task. But we should also express our sincere thanks to the people of the C.I.D.A. Secretariat in Paris, to Mme. Jacqueline Heurtault and her co-workers. This institution, established in 1964, has functioned perfectly since 1968. The annual information service provided by the C.I.D.A. was extraordinarily useful. It was this institution that helped safeguard the series of our international congresses, which has not been interrupted since 1965. Now, the celebration of C.D.I.A.'s 30th birthday coincides with the end of the original Paris secretariat—due to complications caused by organizational and personal problems. But fortunately, the headquarters will move from the Paris museum to the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C., and the work will be continued by J. Coddington as Secretary General (Washington), Robert Raven as current president (Brisbane, Australia) and N. Platnick as membership secretary (New York).